

Case Study

Chilton Public School District

At a glance

- Chilton Public School District
- Calumet County, Wisc.
- 1,200 students in one elementary school (pre-K-5), one middle school (6-8) and one high school (9-12)
- NWEA partner since January 2000
- All students in grades 2 through 10 are tested with NWEA's MAP assessments in reading, language usage, math and science
- Approximately 900 students are tested twice per year (fall and spring) and an additional 200 are tested three times per year (fall, winter and spring)



Chilton's Vision For Data-Informed Education

Chilton educators firmly believe that preparing students to achieve their potential is their highest priority. The district's goals include:

- To be an innovative school system recognized for every student's demonstration of the skills necessary to achieve in a rapidly changing world.
- Demonstrate continuous improvement through the delivery of a challenging education program that fosters student achievement, accommodates individual learning styles and values personal integrity.
- Develop an interactive partnership between the school district and the community that is mutually beneficial.

Chilton has partnered with the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) for the past ten years to help achieve this vision for education through comprehensive and accurate data and a truly individualized approach to teaching.

Chilton's Challenges

While Chilton district officials have focused on achieving their vision for education, they have experienced challenges around consistently achieving, and measuring, student growth year after year.

Throughout the past ten years, Chilton officials "have used the power of MAP™ data to change the nature of conversations around student achievement and academic growth," says Rebecca J. Blink, Ph.D., the district's Director of Curriculum and Instruction, District Assessment Coordinator, District Data Manager and K-12 District Reading Specialist. "When we started working with NWEA, for the first time we finally had an objective tool that allowed us to accurately measure student learning and progress over time."

She says prior to using the MAP assessment, the district would look at their state test results (the Wisconsin Knowledge Concepts Examination) once a year, briefly reviewing the data for about 30 minutes without doing much or even knowing what to make of the data. "We had no consistent measure of student growth and/or performance," she says.

Important Decisions Rely on Solid Data

MAP DATA PROVIDES CLARITY FOR DISTRICT-LEVEL DECISION MAKING

MAP provides Chilton with meaningful student progress data, which informs a range of curricular decisions – such as evaluating Chilton's class offerings. District officials then design and implement new programs based on identified areas of need.

For example, MAP assessment results illustrated that Chilton's middle school students weren't being challenged enough with current class offerings. So Blink and the middle school math teachers dramatically restructured the district's middle school math curriculum, which now includes algebra for advanced 7th graders and geometry for advanced 8th graders.

MAP data also allowed Blink to make curriculum changes at the elementary school level. Struggling students are now enrolled in a remedial math program, called Math Matters, to better prepare them for more challenging math courses they will encounter at the middle and high school level.

"We have set district achievement goals that would have been absolutely immeasurable without the use of MAP," says Blink.

“MAP assessments allow the district to compare local student achievement on a national scale. As we prepare our students to compete in a global marketplace, these comparisons are important to us and the community we serve.”

CLAIRE MARTIN, Ed.D., *Superintendent*



District superintendent Dr. Claire Martin, Ed.D., says the use of MAP assessments has empowered Chilton to “develop and sustain a strong focus on a data-driven approach to student achievement.” Thanks to ten years of “banked” NWEA student data, Martin says, “we have the ability to observe trends, evaluate program effectiveness, focus on student cohort achievement, et cetera.”

Additionally, partnering with NWEA allows the district to compare local student achievement on a national scale. “As we prepare our students to compete in a global marketplace, these comparisons are important to us and the community we serve,” says Martin.

SUPPORT FOR SPECIALIZED INSTRUCTION

One of the district’s special education teachers, Melissa Sosa, finds incredible value in NWEA’s DesCartes learning continuum, which allows teachers to incorporate what they learn from student MAP data into instructional planning by creating specific learning skills and concepts that can be used in the classroom.

“As a teacher of students with special needs I am able to test my students, get results the next day, and identify areas of concern by strand for each student,” says Sosa. “I am better able to differentiate my teaching through the use of the DesCartes options on the website.”

Sosa also uses MAP scores to look at the progress of individual students as it pertains to their Individualized Education Plan. And her students have taken ownership in their learning through the use of the goal-setting worksheets provided by NWEA.

Says Blink, “Even though we have some students who physically cannot speak or hold a pencil, thanks to MAP, we can still demonstrate that they are growing academically.”

Results

For a group of Chilton freshman math students, taking the MAP assessment made a huge difference in their academic growth. After a special class for students with low basic math skills (a decision informed by NWEA data) was implemented at Chilton High School, 86% of the class had a dramatic increase in their MAP scores in math. Parents and students reacted extremely positively to the new course. Same goes for a group of Chilton at-risk 3rd graders who participated in the district’s Math Matters program – 100% achieved proficiency on the 4th grade state math test within one year!

Blink is proud of her district’s achievements using data to improve learning for all students.

“Changing the culture of a school district is a difficult process,” she says. “But we do a good job of getting the data into the hands of our teachers so they can use it to change and adjust their instruction. If at-risk students can improve when instruction matches their needs, imagine the possibilities for all students using computer-adaptive assessment. NWEA acts as ‘the glue’ that holds all of our improvement efforts together.”

Looking Ahead

Although Chilton has been successful using MAP data to promote academic achievement for all of their students, in the spirit of continuous improvement, Blink would like to move the bar even higher in the coming years.

Today, Blink participates in NWEA’s professional development program and then shares her knowledge with other district administrators and teachers. “I’d like to see Chilton utilizing NWEA’s Knowledge Academy more than we currently do,” she says. She hopes to propose to the district that educators take the NWEA course at their own pace and receive credit for their continuing education. “It’s a win-win for everyone: more teachers receive training at their own pace and the district benefits because classroom teachers gain a better understanding of MAP testing,” she says. “Differentiated, job-embedded staff development is a great way to keep an initiative moving forward.”

Overall, Blink is proud of her district’s achievements using data to improve learning for all students.

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TO LEARN MORE

To learn more about NWEA’s solutions and programs, including the suite of Measures of Academic Progress assessments, visit www.nwea.org.

To learn more about the Chilton Public School District, visit www.chilton.k12.wi.us.